

Utah company drilling for geothermal power hits boiling water

By PAUL FOY
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SALT LAKE CITY (AP) - An underground reservoir in southwestern Utah could be the source of the first geothermal plant in the state in 23 years.

Provo-based [Raser Technologies Inc.](#) believes it hit enough hot water to keep a power plant cycling continuously but still is studying the site, an official said Wednesday.

For competitive reasons, Raser won't say exactly where in the Escalante desert it hit hot water or how deep it had to drill.

"We anticipate this will be a site of a geothermal plant," said Richard Putnam, Raser's investor-relations director.

The 10-megawatt plant would generate enough power for 7,000 houses.

At 260 degrees, the water exceeds boiling temperatures but doesn't rank very hot for thermal power. Temperatures of up to 400 degrees are considered more ideal. Yet Raser's strategy is to make use of ground water at lower temperatures, using a secondary fluid with a lower boiling point to drive power turbines.

Raser, a public company since 2003 that has yet to earn any significant revenue, plans to build three other geothermal power plants in Nevada and a fourth in New Mexico. It has lined up 56 institutional investors that hold 16 percent of the company's stock.

Raser is negotiating with public utilities for sale of the power.

Finding hot temperatures deep in the earth's crust is easy, but it takes a reliable underground water supply to produce the steam needed for power generation.

With the price of oil soaring, more companies are looking to exploit geothermal power. Some 86 projects are in the works in 10 Western states plus Alaska and Hawaii, the Geothermal Energy Association said in a report issued last month.

Utah has two geothermal power plants, both in Beaver County.

One, acquired by a company called Recurrent Resources in 2003, has been shut down for rebuilding. The other is operated by the utility [Rocky Mountain Power](#). The 23-megawatt plant taps water as hot as 400 degrees a mile deep, according to the Utah Geological Survey.

Some commercial greenhouses in Utah also tap thermal water for space heating, and nine resorts use it to warm pools and baths.

Raser has no plans to develop spas along with its thermal plants, which won't emit any steam or excess water. The sites are all remote, far from populated centers, Putnam said.